DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 374 CS 510 412

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TITLE	The Starlight Princess: Learning from the Theatre Experience.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	15p.
PUB TYPE	Creative Works (030) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; *Scripts; *Student Motivation; *Student Participation; Teacher Role; *Theater Arts
IDENTIFIERS	*Drama in Education

ABSTRACT

For students, a multi-level of learning goes into the production of a play. When students are involved in a production, they are reading, memorizing and interpreting a script. They are writing notes and learning to take stage directions, and they are using math concepts when they are building a set. On the stage they learn that the ensemble (or small group) is important as well as the entire group--no one person alone will make up a production, every player in the cast is important as are all the people behind the scenes. To motivate students is to have a student focused curriculum--one in which the student is permitted to discover, ask questions, and progress in an inquiry approach to learning. The teacher/director can get as elaborate or as minimal with the play production as he/she wishes, but the prime reason for performing the play is to engage the students in an authentic, artistic theater experience, so that they can discover not only what goes into the development of a drama, but form new insights to learning through direct involvement in theater production that include characterization, plot development, sequencing, movement, and gesture. An original 9-character play, "The Starlight Princess," can be used by teachers to engage elementary students in learning through theater. (NKA)

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The Starlight Princess: Learning from the Theatre Experience.

by Lorie A. Annarella

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CS 510 412

The Starlight Princess

Learning from the Theatre Experience

There is a multi-level of learning that goes into the production of a play. When students are involved in a production, they are reading, memorizing and interpreting script. They are writing notes and learning to take stage directions from the director. And they are certainly using math concepts when they are building a set. On the stage as actors they are learning the responsibility of being there for their fellow actors. They learn also that ensemble (or small group) is important as well as whole group. Playing off another character through gesture and dialogue teaches them to focus and to read body language, and relegates the correct use of the voice through oral interpretation. Memorization is part of the learning experience of play production. The students will have to memorize the playwright's lines and will learn to give the correct cue line to ensure fluency and timing in the play. Students will learn that there is no one person alone that will make up a production, every player in the cast is important as well as all players behind the scenes.

Motivation in the Classroom

One of the primary responsibilities of the teacher is to motivate. When students are not interested in what is being taught, they don't learn. To motivate students is to have a student focused curriculum--- one in which the student is permitted to discover, ask questions and to progress in an inquiry approach to learning. Theatre production can provide this for the student. In presenting a play all cast membe~s (students) become the primary focus of the production. When the play to be performed is chosen, the students will be asked not only to act in the production, but also to help with, and perform in all aspects of the production. The teacher/director can get as elaborate or as minimal with the play production as they wish, but the prime reason for performing the play is to engage the students in an authentic, artistic theatre experience, so that they can discover not only what goes into the development of a drama, but to form new insights to learning through direct involvement in theatre production that include characterization, plot development, sequencing, movement and gesture. Theatre production thrives on a high level of energy and takes the holistic approach of learning to a new level. The following is a play that can be used by the teacher to engage students in learning through theatre play and production.

Cast of Characters

Santa	Himself
Chipper	Elf
Flip	Elf
Fru	Elf (They all work for Santa)
Wendar	Wizard
Dingo	Dragon
Snowflake	
Princess Starlight	
Prince Michael	

Scene

The scene is outside in a forest near the Ice Palace of Wendar. It is very cold, and the trees and bushes all have become covered with snow and ice. Santa is seen looking in the distance in search of something. Just then three mice appear.

(Santa is seen looking in the distance. Just then three mice appear)

CHIPPER
Santa, Santa, thank goodness we've found you.

FLIP
Maybe now we can get help for the princess.

SANTA
The Princess?

FRU
Yes, Santa. We know the secret of the Ice Palace. Don't we Chipper and Flip?

CHIPPER
Wendar has captured a princess and turned her into a frozen snowflake.

FLIP
And oh, she's so sad and lonely.

SANTA
So that's why it's been so difficult to locate the lost princess. Her father has sent out an alarm for her. She has been missing for weeks now. Everyone is very worried about her.

FRU
Well, we know that the princess is the secret that Wendar has kept in the Ice Palace. We must help her to escape.

SANTA
Thank you mice for sharing your news with me. I'll do all that I can to help the princess.

CHIPPER, FLIP, FRU
Thank you, Santa.

SANTA
Now I wonder what I can do to help the princess?

(Santa asks the children in the audience. The curtain opens and a room in the Ice Palace is seen. A work bench is on stage left with a large crystal ball on it. In the center, high above everything else on the set, is a large, beautiful snowflake. A wicked wizard enters stage

(right, humming to humming to himself. He looks almost comical in his large wizard hat with a half moon on it and he is wearing a black robe. He approaches the large snowflake)

WIZARD
Well now, my lovely princess, how are you today?

SNOWFLAKE
Oh, I'm so sad. You know I am wizard. Yet, you keep asking me how I am every day since you changed me from a princess into a snowflake. You understand how lonely I am being frozen in your Ice Palace. And I'm cold---so cold. Please turn me back into myself again so that I can go home. Won't you please?

WIZARD
How could anyone not like living here in my Ice Palace?

(A large dragon enters stage left-- he is a silly looking reptile who continually is ready to sneeze because of the cold)

WIZARD (Continued)
Isn't that right, Dingo?

DINGO
Yes, your wizardry. Ah, ah, ah....

WIZARD
Watch where you sneeze, Dingo. Your fire will melt my beautiful snowflake and my palace as well. Be careful!

DINGO
Yes, your wizardry. Ah, ah, ah...

(The wizard grabs Dingo's mouth and shuts it before he has time to sneeze)

WIZARD
Now don't talk nonsense, princess. Why it's beautiful here, a little cold maybe--but once your heart gets as cold as mine you won't feel the cold anymore.

DINGO
You had just better get used to being a snowflake, princess, because there is no escape.

(Dingo exits)

SNOWFLAKE
I hope my heart never gets as cold as yours, Wendar.

(The princess begins to cry and snow begins to fall)

SNOWFLAKE (Continued)

I want to go home!

WIZARD

That's my princess, after you shed a few tears you'll feel better.

(Wizard exits. The princess is still crying when three mice enter.

CHIPPER

Oh dear, she's crying again.

FLIP

What shall we do to make her stop crying this time, Chipper?

CHIPPER

When she cries, her tears turn to snow and it makes it even colder in this palace. What do you think, Fru?

FRU

I know. I'll dance. She'll see me dance and she'll stop crying.

(Fru begins to dance and does a miserable job of it)

CHIPPER

Just stop that! Can't you see the princess is crying even harder!

FLIP

Oh, princess, don't cry. I'll sing to you and I know you'll feel better.

(Flip begins to sing---the other two mice hold their ears because the song is sung poorly)

CHIPPER

I know! Why don't we all sing and dance and make the princess forget her troubles. Are you ready Flip and Fru?

(The mice all begin to dance and sing a Christmas song)

CHIPPER

Now we better stop. I think the princess is just lonely and needs some company. Isn't that right princess?

SNOWFLAKE

Yes, I am lonely. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings before Flip and Fru. I thought you danced just beautifully Fru. And Flip your song was wonderful. But once I started to cry, I just

SNOWFLAKE (Continued)
couldn't stop. You three are the only friends I have here. I don't know what I would do without your friendship. I feel so much better since all of you sang and danced for me.

CHIPPER
We'll just have to think of some way to help you. It's so cold in this palace of ice and you have such a warm heart, I would hate to see your heart get as cold as the wizard's. Now remember, just don't cry anymore because your tears will turn to snow and make you colder.

SNOWFLAKE
I'll remember.

FRU
I would love to see what you really look like, princess.

FLIP
You really are beautiful as a snowflake but I bet you're even more beautiful as a princess.

SNOWFLAKE
Thank you so much for the compliment.

FLIP
Gee, it was nothing.

SNOWFLAKE
Oh, look, it's evening and I see the first star of night. I'm going to make a wish.

First star in the sky above
I ask a special wish with love
Take all my dreams as diamonds bright
Please grant the wish I ask tonight

(the princess says the wish and then she sings the wish as a song---the mice find this interesting and they begin to sing the song with the princess)

CHIPPER (To Flip and Fru)
I think I know what she wished for.

FLIP AND FRU
Yes, we do too.

FRU
I know what I'm going to call you. I'm going to call you my Starlight Princess. You're not an Ice Princess, you're a Starlight Princess.

(they all bow and call her Princess Starlight)

SNOWFLAKE
You've made me so happy my little friends.

(the moment comes to an end when a loud sneeze is heard from outside. The mice look terrified and a chase is on as Dingo Dragon appears)

FRU
Look out Flip. Look out Chipper. Here comes Dingo.

(enter Dingo)

DINGO
So here you are causing trouble. If I catch you, I'll eat you for tasty morsels.

SNOWFLAKE
Please don't hurt them, Dingo. They haven't done any harm. They were only helping me not to feel so lonely.

DINGO
Never mind defending them. I'm going to catch them and when I do, that will be the end of them.

(exit Dingo. Wizard enters and goes to the crystal ball)

WIZARD
What's this! Someone must be coming near my kingdom.

(suddenly jungle bells are heard)

WIZARD (Continued)
It must be that time of year again. What time of year do you think it is?

(the wizard asks the children)

WIZARD (Continued)
It's Santa Claus all right. Why does he have to be nosing around here. What can he want. Dingo, Dingo! Come at once.

(enter Dingo)

DINGO
Yes, Wendar, your wizardry.

WIZARD
We have a visitor. I saw Santa Claus in the crystal. Since I don't want him inside my Ice Palace, I'm going to go outside and see what he wants. You watch inside the palace. And don't sneeze. Do you understand?

DINGO
Yes, Wendar, but do be nice to Santa. It would be so nice if I got some presents at Christmas time like all of those good boys and girls do.

WIZARD
Be quiet Dingo, and stop sniveling. Do you hear?

DINGO
Yes, boss, I mean your wizardry.

(curtain closes---the scene is outside the Ice Palace---Santa is talking to his reindeer)

SANTA
Well Donner, this is it, the Ice Palace. I wonder if the princess could be inside. When I heard from her father that she was missing in the North Pole, I immediatly thought of the Ice Palace.

(just then the Wizard appears)

WIZARD
If it isn't Santa Claus. You're not lost are you, Santa?

SANTA
No, Wendar, I'm not lost. I'm here looking for a beautiful princess who is reported lost in the North Pole. She is greatly missed by her family. And her father wants her found as soon as possible. Naturally I thought of you and your Ice Palace. Have you seen anything of a princess around your ice palace?

WIZARD
No, Santa. I haven't seen anyone near here. You know no one would want to live in my Ice Palace. It's too cold.

SANTA
Yes, yes, but I just thought you might have seen her. Are you sure Wendar?

WIZARD
Quite sure, Santa. And now, I'm afraid I must go. I would ask you to come in, but I know it would be too cold for you.

(exit Wendar--Santa is ready to leave and he sees someone coming)

SANTA
Ho, ho, ho, if it isn't Prince Michael.

PRINCE
Hello Santa. I'm here looking for a lost princess. Her father is most distressed over her disappearance. By some chance, have you seen her?

SANTA
No, Prince Michael, I haven't. But I have a feeling that she is nearby. I have just spoken to Wendar the Wizard who lives in this Palace of Ice. He says he hasn't seen any princess. But somehow I just don't believe him. Three mice told me the princess is in the Ice Palace begin kept a prisoner by Wendar. They said he has turned her into a snowflake. Maybe you can find out the truth about the missing princess. One thing I know for sure, it's getting late and I'm due back in the toy shop soon. So I must go. Good luck Prince Michael. I hope you find our missing princess. Let me know if you need any help. After I'm finished in the toy shop, I'll come back to help you look for the princess.

PRINCE
Goodbye Santa. Now, how shall I get inside this palace of ice to see if the princess is there?

(Santa exits--three mice appear)

CHIPPER
We can help you.

PRINCE
Who are you?

CHIPPER
My name is Chipper.

FLIP
I'm Flip.

FRU
And I'm Fru. Who are you?

PRINCE
My name is Prince Michael.

CHIPPER
Wendar the Wizard has the princess in his Ice Palace.

FLIP
He turned her into a snowflake.

FRU
She's so sad.

CHIPPER
We'll get you inside the Ice Palace to see her, but we must be careful because the wizard has Dingo to guard the palace.

PRINCE

Who is Dingo?

FLIP

Dingo is a dragon.

FRU

He doesn't like us very much.

FLIP

He tries to catch us and eat us.

PRINCE

I'm not afraid of a wizard or his dragon. Can you get me inside the palace?

CHIPPER

Yes we can, but you'll have to go through the Crystal Forest. You must be very careful. The Crystal Forest can be trecherous.

(Chipper turns to the other two mice and says)

CHIPPER (Continued)

I think he's the one who can rescue our Princess Starlight. Come on, let's go!

(the prince and the mice are seen going through the Crystal Forest. It is very cold and frightening. A large dragon is seen sleeping near the palace gate. He is supposed to be guarding the entrance, but he is snoring and sound asleep. A huge crystal hand comes from out of nowhere and tries to grab the prince and the mice. They manage to escape)

PRINCE

We made it through my friends.

CHIPPER, FLIP, FRU

Hooray!

PRINCE

Where is the princess?

CHIPPER

There she is.

PRINCE

Good day to you Princess Starlight.

SNOWFLAKE
Who are you? And how did you know to call me Princess Starlight?

PRINCE
My name is Prince Michael. Your friends, the mice, told me they call you Princess Starlight. I've come to rescue you. The mice helped me get into the Ice Palace.

PRINCESS
Oh, Prince Michael, it is very dangerous for you to be here. Dingo is on guard and he will try to destroy you. And if Wendar finds you here, he'll lock you away forever.

PRINCE
Don't worry princess. The mice told me about Dingo. We have a plan that will insure your escape from this place. We're going to use Dingo to help us.

SNOWFLAKE
I don't understand.

PRINCE
You soon will.

(just then an ah, ah, ah...sound is heard)

SNOWFLAKE
Oh, here comes Dingo now. You had better hide.

PRINCE
Not yet princess.

(Wendar and Dingo are heard from a distance)

WIZARD
Go to the palace room and continue to guard the princess, Dingo. I saw a prince in my crystal ball outside the palace. He was talking with Santa. Be on guard for him.

DINGO
Yes, your wizardry.

(enter Dingo. He sees the prince)

DINGO (Continued)
What are you doing here? I'm going to catch you and lock you away forever!

PRINCE
Just try it you dingy dragon. You'll have to catch me first!

(the chase is on--Chipper appears with a can of pepper. He blows the pepper into Dingo's face. A cloud of smoke is seen and a loud achoo is heard. The snowflake melts and the real princess is seen. During all of this struggling the prince ties a rope around Dingo)

PRINCE

Here Chipper, take this dragon away. Now that he is weak from sneezing he shouldn't be any problem. If he gives you any trouble, just use the pepper.

CHIPPER

Yes, Prince Michael. Come on Dingo.

DINGO

Gee, Princess Starlight, I'm sorry. You're so beautiful as a princess. I'm sorry I caused you any harm. I'll never hurt anyone again.

(exit Dingo and Chipper)

PRINCESS

Thank you Prince Michael. It feels wonderful to be myself again.

(ho, ho, ho is heard as Santa enters with Wendar)

SANTA

Look who I found trying to escape the Palace of Ice.

WIZARD

I didn't mean any harm to you, princess. I was just lonely here in my Palace of Ice.

SANTA

There are other ways to overcome loneliness, Wendar.

WIZARD

I'm so sorry.

SANTA

This time sorry is not enough, Wendar. You and Dingo are going to come with me and work with my elves to learn how to help people instead of harm them. Chipper, Flip and Fru will come too. You will take orders from them.

PRINCE

And now Princess Starlight, I will take you home.

PRINCESS

I can never say thank you enough, Prince Michael.

(just then, Chipper, Flip and Fru are seen at the side of the stage)

PRINCESS (Continued)
Thank you my wonderful friends! Chipper and Flip and Fru, I love you!

(curtain closes, Santa appears)

SANTA
Soon it will be Christmas girls and boys. Remember to be kind to one another and to help one another and you will be as happy as our Starlight Princess. Merry Christmas.

END OF PLAY